

LBI announces LCBGP awards to the City of Hammond and the Southern University Agriculture Center (April 25, 2012)

The Louisiana Division of Administration (DOA) has announced its Louisiana Communities Broadband Grant Program (LCBGP) award to:

- The City of Hammond for its “Increasing Broadband Access and Computer Use in the Hammond Area” project; and,
- The Southern University Agriculture Center (SU-Ag) for its “Building Digital Communities in Rural Louisiana” project.

The City of Hammond submitted a multi-faceted proposal that include community outreach, website enhancement and the development of a mobile video unit. Specifically, the project will provide for:

- Local Awareness and Data Collection campaign to capture data on existing broadband / computer usage.
- Creation of a Computer Training Lab at the Kenney Community Center, which serves a population of lower-income households. Partnering organizations will offer a variety of training classes, focusing on basic computing, GED Preparation, Internet Safety and more.
- Enhancement of the Purchasing Section on the City of Hammond website. The City will transition from a paper-driven bid management system to an online system that allows the purchasing process to be conducted entirely online.
- Creation of a Portable Video Production Unit, which will allow streaming of public meetings, city events, public information and alerts.

The goals of the Southern University Agriculture Center project will be focused on engaging the business and governmental communities within St. Landry and Evangeline parishes to participate in broadband educational and training programs, before guiding the development of e-commerce and e-government websites, through a technical assistance program. Specifically, the project will provide:

- Information Technology Advisory Council (ITAC) will consist of community leaders within the bi-parish area, who will guide the planning process of developing a plan for better broadband utilization and adoption in the public and private sectors.
- Broadband Education and Training Programs will be designed and presented, based on the Southern Rural Development Center’s “Connecting Rural Communities” curriculum, specifically targeting improvement in the e-business climate and the e-government systems in the two parishes.
- Technical Assistance Program, resulting in the creation of 50 new online businesses and/or social media strategies and 20 new online e-government or faith-based businesses and/or social media strategies, will be operated by SU-Ag. In this program, business and governmental beneficiaries will receive hands-on assistance in getting online – from website address acquisition through launch.

LCBGP is a technical assistance program that is designed to fund broadband-related planning and demonstration projects among rural communities that are un-served or underserved by commercial broadband providers. LCBGP is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and requires a 20% project grantee match through cash and/or in-kind contributions.

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“We view the projects of both the Southern Ag Center and the City of Hammond as exactly what we envisioned for the LCBGP program,” said David Moore, the State Broadband Grant Program Director. “Southern is bringing broadband education and e-commerce capabilities to a part of the state in dire need of this investment, while Hammond plans to engage a part of its community that has been reluctant to adopt broadband, while also automating its procurement system and acquiring the capability to record and stream important events to its constituency.”

These mark the fifth and sixth awards made through the LCBGP, since the program’s inception late last year. LBI staff anticipates making several additional awards in the coming weeks and look forward to partnering with award recipients to the benefit of the citizens of the targeted communities.